

# Adventures in Shared Indulgence

BY DANIELLE CHARBONNEAU

## IN A WORLD WHERE WE RETREAT TO OUR OWN CORNERS OF

the home, plugged into our own individual iPads and laptops to binge watch Netflix in the privacy of our own little sphere, culture can sometimes be a bit isolating. Sure, we might discuss a show, but we're not really sharing the experience. Dining out can sometimes feel the same way — each person burying their heads in their own individual entrée, occasionally exchanging short remarks like “How's the steak?” — “Good.”

It's no wonder why sometimes we crave a little more connection. The recent surge in shared dining and tapas-style restaurants seems to be a response to such a phenomena. In 2016, shared dining made the top-ten list for rising themes by the National Restaurant Association's culinary forecast survey. The Italians know well the power inherent in a shared meal — how large plates, red wine and full bellies assure conversation and connection. Yet the traditional way feels a bit too grandma's house. Today's shared dining restaurants seem to be attempting to elevate the communal dining experience to a more sophisticated and elegant affair.

Terra Mare is no exception. The new seaside restaurant on the first floor of the Conrad hotel in Ft. Lauderdale has taken the shared dining experience to bright new levels. Terra Mare, which means land and sea in Italian, is the perfect name for the restaurant. The menu, prepared by Executive Chef Johan Svensson (a Swedish



culinary master hailing from Nobu in London) plays both on land (like thick-cut steak and crispy pork belly) and sea (such as fresh-caught fish, scallops and lobster). The restaurant's ethereal, modern design (with a wave-shaped ceiling, whimsical art made from backlit crystals and a U-shaped bar in the center) play off the same themes in a sleek, understated way.

At Terra Mare I think of the phrase — “Its about the journey, not the destination.” And this journey is immersive, sensory and fun. Our server, well-trained and personable, guided our path ahead, helping us plan the courses and pair them with a bright, crisp wine — a 2015 Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough — dry, with a tart pinch of grapefruit and bright citrus notes. It was a refreshing palate cleanser to go with our first two plates — the first an ahi tuna crudo, the second pan-seared sea scallops.

The ahi came topped with a dusting of pistachio crumble and diced pieces of compressed watermelon. At first, it seemed an odd combination, but the saltiness and crunch of the pistachios, paired with the juicy pop of watermelon and melt-in-your-mouth decadence of freshly-caught ahi was fairly brilliant. A paint stroke of yuzu on the side of the plate added both a nice aesthetic touch and a tasty place to push your tuna.

>>>



## TO THE POINT **URBAN ADVENTURE**

◀◀◀ The sea scallops were perfectly pan seared and golden (with that nice seared ring around the edges). They sliced easily, firm, but tender and juicy, with a mild sweetness. Topped with a fresh corn salad with roasted poblano and a touch of fresh jalapeño. The corn was as fresh as if it had been cut straight from a summer cob. The sweet corn, balanced with the richness of the sea scallops and spicy kick of jalapeño, gave the plate a refreshing balance of sweet and spicy.

After the first two courses, we knew we were in for a well-thought-out journey, driven by Chef Svensson. There was a sense of camaraderie in the dining room, as if we were all taking a journey together — each table its own raft down the same culinary river. We watched, in awe, as servers brought out impressive shared entrées to the tables around us. To our left, two men were served a whole fried snapper, prepared tableside on a rolling cart. To our right, a woman was served a giant tagine in a hand-painted ceramic dish, the aroma wafting out as the lid was lifted.

Our second course — two more small plates — ventured into more rich and savory territory. The first was a Fritto Misto. For those of you (like us), who have never experienced a Fritto Misto, it is traditionally a combination of lightly fried fish and seafood, mixed with other fresh ingredients. In Terra Mare's case, the Fritto Misto had mango, radish, cilantro and a soy-lime vinaigrette amidst a mixture flaky white fish and thin rings of squid, all lightly fried and crispy (like a light tempura). In Svensson's version, the fried seafood was also dusted with some sort of paprika and spices, giving each

bite a savory little kick.

After three seafood dishes, the crispy pork belly was a nice departure from the "mare" side of the menu and our first step into the "terra." The pork belly had a perfect, crispy sear. The fat and glaze had caramelized the outside, while the inside was rich and indulgent — a great segue into our entrées.

My guest opted for the New York Strip steak, aged 28 days, seared and served with a whipped herb butter and mixed roasted potatoes. I chose the sea bass with a sweet miso glaze, served with forbidden rice and baby bok choy. The bok choy was a bit bitter for my tastes, though I could see its purpose in counterbalancing the sweet.

For dessert, a light and airy key-lime cheesecake (a small, more modern, bite-sized dome) was a nice conclusion to the Terra Mare excursion. While I personally feel the cheesecake lacked the tart punch I have come to expect with anything labeled key-lime, the lightness of the whipped cream cheese was refreshing.

By the end of our Terra Mare journey, my head felt in the clouds while my body felt weighted. With the restaurant's oceanside location, we were able to meander our pleasantly-plump bodies across the street to stroll barefoot in the sand. We laid on the beach and watched the stars, which felt the perfect ending to such a decadent and whimsical excursion. \*

*Terra Mare is located at 551 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd. Visit [terramarfl.com](http://terramarfl.com) for more information.*



**TRULINE®**  
The Innovative Hybrid Sheet Piling System®

# THE ULTIMATE SEAWALL

**POUR-IN-PLACE, STEEL-REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH VINYL PROTECTION**

TRULINE® ... the next generation of seawall technology offering a strong steel-reinforced concrete wall within a vinyl form, protecting the concrete from harsh salt water and elements for longer service life and virtually no maintenance.

View photos and installation video at [www.truline.us](http://www.truline.us)

**(239) 591-6234**